

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, RP

SUBJECT: VISIT OF STAFFDEL PARKER, MAY 13-17

REF: MANILA 6827 (C)

SUMMARY: AT HER REQUEST, MRS. DOROTHY PARKER, MINORITY COUNSEL, SENATE JUDICIARY SUBCOMMITTEE ON REFUGEES AND ESCAPEES, MET MANILA-BASED AP AND UPI CORRESPONDENTS IN APPARENT EFFORT DRUM-UP PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE INDOCHINA REFUGEE PROGRAM. LITTLE NEW CAME OUT OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE AND THE RESULTING STORIES REFLECTED THIS. END SUMMARY

1. USIS ARRANGED INTERVIEW MAY 16 AT HYATT REGENCY HOTEL WITH CARL ROBINSON, AP, AND KATE WEBB, UPI, BOTH LONG-TIME INDOCHINA CORRESPONDENTS AND PARTICIPANTS IN THE SAIGON EXODUS. MRS. PARKER HAD JUST RETURNED FROM INSPECTING THE REFUGEE CAMP ON GRANDE ISLAND AT SUBIC AND ENTHUSIASTICALLY DESCRIBED THE SELFLESS EFFORTS OF NAVY WIVES AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS IN CARING FOR THE REFUGEES. SHE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE SAME SPIRIT WOULD PREVAIL IN THE UNITED STATES AND THAT CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF FUNDS WOULD BREAK THE LOGJAM IN GUAM AND PHILIPPINE REFUGEE CAMPS.

2. SHE TOLD THE CORRESPONDENTS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT ATTITUDE PREVAILED IN HANDLING OF REFUGEES AT GRANDE ISLAND AS COMPARED
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TO THE TREATMENT THEY RECEIVED IN THAILAND.

SHE SAID SHE WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT 226 VIETNAMESE

REFUGEES STILL LIVING ON BOATS IN THE HARBOR NEAR UTAPAO AIR BASE. SHE SAID SANITARY CONDITIONS ON THE BOATS WERE APPALLING AND THAT TWO OF THE OVERCROWDED BOATS HAD ALREADY CAPSIZED.

3. CITING THEIR OWN VISITS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH THE REGUGES, BOTH CORRESPONDENTS APPEARED UNIMPRESSED BY MRS. PARKER'S UPBEAT APPROACH. KATE WEBB ASKED WHY CAMBODIANS WHO FLED PHNOM PENH AT THEIR OWN EXPENSE-- "AT NO COST TO THE U.S. TAXPAYER," SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED INTO THE U.S. SPONSORED REFUGEE PROGRAM. MRS. PARKER RESPONDED THAT THEY HAD CHOSEN TO THROW THEMSELVES ON THE MERCY OF ANOTHER GOVERNMENT ANND WERE THEREFORE NO LONGER UNITED STATES' RESPONSIBILITY. MISS WEBB WAS REFERRING SPECIFICALLY TO SEVERAL CAMBODIAN UPI STAFFERS NOW IN BANGKOK WHOSE PERMIT TO REMAIN THERE EXPIRED MAY 19TH.

4. CARL ROBINSON'S VIETNAMESE WIFE AT THE TIME OF THE INTERVIEW WAS OUTSIDE THE GUAM REFUGEE CAMP ATTEMPTING TO EXTRICATE THE ROBINSON'S TWO ADOPTED VIETNAMESE CHILDREN FOR A COMMERCIAL FLIGHT TO THE U.S. SHE WAS APPARENTLY RUNNING INTO A WALL OF RED TAPE. MRS. PARKER TOOK THEIR NAMES AND PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES

5. NEITHER CORRESPONDENT RAISED THE QUESTION OF G.O.P. PROTESTS TO TRANSMITING VIETNAMESE POLITICAL AND MILITARY PERSONALITIES.

6. COMMENT: MRS. PARKER DID ADMIRABLE JOB OF KEEPING COOL IN FACE OF PERSONAL ACCUSATIONS THAT THE REFUGEE PROGRAM WAS LESS THAN WELL CONCEIVED. SHE TOOK THE POSITION SHE WAS SEEKING SOLUTIONS AND DID NOT HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS, BUT CAME UP SOMEWHAT SHORT WHEN ASKED WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS SHE WOULD MAKE TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE. ONLY BRIEF WIRE SERVICE STORIES WITH LITTLE NEWS CONTENT RESULTED FROM THE PRESS CONFERENCE. USIS IS POUCHING THE TWO WIRE STORIES C/O EA/PHL. SULLIVAN

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